CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SIX HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 August 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Michel Servais (Belgium)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 633rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On the list of speakers for today are the representatives of Italy, the United States of America and India. And straight away I give the floor to my friend and colleague, Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso.

Mr. NEGROTTO CAMBIASO (Italy) (translated from French): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to thank you very much and to pay tribute to the cheerful and effective simplicity with which you perform your duties to the Conference on Disarmament and within the Western Group. Allow me also to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Ambassador Berasategui, above all for his friendship, and for his always subtle and pertinent advice that helped me and will help the Conference to identify more clearly the path it is to follow. My gratitude extends to all his valuable and dedicated staff at the various levels of the secretariat.

In returning here to Geneva to take leave of all of you, I wondered whether the priority responsibility of the CD during these decisive days for the chemical weapons convention would justify the indulgence of a few moments away from the substance to focus on a farewell, particularly as I have no particular inspiration to share; I am not engaged in some important event, but I have been away from a town, an activity, a group of colleagues and friends of whom I was fond. So I have no final message to deliver, none that would depart from the day-to-day experience of a painstaking search for points of convergence, in this very room, or in the committees, groups and subgroups of the Conference on Disarmament. It is there, and not when one is casting off the moorings, that the hope for a less well-armed and therefore more secure world is realized or, on the contrary, collapses. Nevertheless, this ritual of ours, of greetings and appreciation to those who arrive or are leaving, this meticulous attention to courtesy, are they not intrinsically an indication of the style with which we would like international relations to be increasingly imbued? For even today, through one of the destructive processes of assimilation that are inherent in nationalism, there are shortcomings that we strive every day to overcome in our personal relations that are transformed into virtues once they are placed at the service of what is considered to be the higher interest of our own countries. Thus, from my three years spent in the CD, I will take away with me first and foremost the pleasant memory of general kindness characterizing our negotiations, even the most difficult ones, and the hope that this is not just an exercise in style, but a genuine effort to bring the code of conduct among States closer to the far more refined code which prevails among individuals.

Given the dramatic and unexpected developments in certain regions of Europe, we are compelled to acknowledge that there is no region of the world that can be described as exemplary or considered totally free from irrational and deadly armed violence. Hence we must regrettably recognize how difficult it is for the international community to identify and implement the appropriate responses when the fire has already spread, whether we are speaking of armed violence or the scandal of the death of whole populations through famine, often as a result of such violence; or when we seek to restore the international rule of law that has been flouted. It is for that reason

(Mr. Negrotto Cambiaso, Italy)

that I wish to reaffirm once again, on behalf of my country and on my own behalf, my full confidence in the role of the Conference on Disarmament, a role that is both major and pressing. We are convinced that this Conference, if its membership and responsibilities are updated, will be able to make a major contribution to laying the groundwork for the prevention of certain tragedies: by providing the international community with a preventive network of specific arrangements and above all by giving its organs effective and credible means of monitoring their implementation. As we have often repeated in respect of chemical weapons, the same approach applies, in our view, to the urgent monitoring of the transfer, production and stockpiling of weapons by international bodies; to outer space, where international measures to monitor its utilization, and even certain limitations on that utilization, now seem possible and necessary; to the nuclear test ban, where the time lost this year must be made up in the very near future, in keeping with the progress announced or achieved in the reduction of stockpiles, as well as widespread expectations on the part of the public.

I would have liked to experience with you and all my colleagues and friends in the CD the phase in which the chemical weapons convention was finalized. The impermanence of our status as nomads prevents me from doing so. That is why, as I say goodbye to you today, I mean above all au revoir, until we meet again soon in Paris, for the signature of the chemical weapons convention, where I very much hope I will see all the friends, without exception, that I was fortunate enough to meet here or in New York, with whom it was possible and agreeable, day after day, to achieve an important and promising result; an experience which will remain among the finest memories of my professional career.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso for his kind words addressed to me and particularly for the statement he has just made and the wishes he addressed to our Conference for the successful conclusion of the negotiations on chemical weapons. Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso has just delivered his last statement on behalf of his country. He represented Italy for approximately three years, during which he discharged his duties with remarkable diplomatic skill and talent, in the best traditions of the Farnesina. In 1990 he took up the chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons with the professional qualities that I have just emphasized, and with his personal qualities which we have all been able to appreciate. He also participated very decisively this year in the negotiations on the draft convention prohibiting chemical weapons, in his capacity as coordinator for the Group of Western Countries. He leaves us now to take up very weighty duties in his Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a responsibility which implies uncommon distinction. On behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I wish Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso and his family every success in their future activities, and I assure him of my friendship. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Ledogar.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): Mr. President, you modestly say it's only an accident of alphabet that brings you the the head chair. Nevertheless it is a most fortuitous accident from our point of view to have your sage and expert leadership as President of the Conference on Disarmament at this critical month when we bring to a close our work on a convention to ban chemical weapons. May I join you in bidding farewell and good wishes to our friend Andrea Negrotto Cambiaso, who is moving upward to a very important position in Rome?

I am digressing today from our most important CWC goal for a few moments to consider agenda item 1, "Nuclear test ban". The United States fully concurred with the statement of the Western Group read by Ambassador Tanaka on 18 August. However, the absence this year of any meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban has deprived the United States, as well as other nations, of the opportunity to make its contributions in that body. Therefore, I must try to compress today in a few sentences what we would have elaborated in detail in meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee, had it been formed.

We intended, for example, to build upon the excellent exchange of last year on nuclear testing - why testing takes place; its relationship, if any, to nuclear non-proliferation; its verifiability; and many other topics. We also planned to comment on the implications for nuclear testing of the dramatic changes brought about by the START Treaty, the 17 June 1992 Joint Understanding on further strategic reductions, and other steps taken by States of the former Soviet Union and the United States. These changes will reduce the nuclear forces to less than one third of the 1990 level. We also wanted to review recent changes to the nuclear testing policy of the United States. Time no longer permits us to do that in detail; consequently, I am setting forth only the main points.

First, the purpose of all United States underground nuclear testing is to evaluate and improve the safety of the nuclear stockpile, and to maintain the reliability of our sharply reduced nuclear deterrent. This will be a continuing requirement as long as the need for a nuclear deterrent exists.

Second, the United States will conduct only the minimum number of tests necessary for these purposes. We now anticipate not more than six tests per year over the next five years. This level is a small fraction of the numbers of tests conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s.

And third, the United States will limit the yield of nuclear tests to the minimum necessary. We now anticipate not more than three tests per year in excess of 35 kilotons.

Unfortunately, despite the painstaking efforts of our exceptionally capable colleague from India, the activities of the Conference on Disarmament with respect to an Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban were a model of how not to do business. The 13 August statement of the Group of 21 alleges that certain nuclear Powers of the Western Group laid down obstacles to re-establishing the Ad Hoc Committee. This is simply untrue. The position of both the United Kingdom and the United States - that the time is not right for

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

a negotiating mandate for the Committee - is well known to everyone. The United States reluctantly engaged in discussions to try to change last year's mandate, which was perfectly serviceable, in hopes that minor changes could lead to the establishing of the Committee.

It is now perfectly clear that no programme of work and no changes in the mandate would have enjoyed consensus. If those very few States that could not accept the mandate of last year had simply said that there was no point in having a committee without a negotiating mandate, we could have saved ourselves many wasted hours spent posturing over a programme of work and tinkering with the wording of a mandate.

The United States and nearly all other members of the CD believed that a structured dialogue on nuclear testing would have benefited the Conference; one or two other States did not so believe. In the future, let us spare ourselves the futility of empty shadow-boxing over procedure. Let us be candid enough to set aside issues where we have unbridgeable differences, and focus on those issues that promise success.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your kind and encouraging words to me, and for the statement you have just made, of which note will be taken. I now give the floor to the representative of India, Ambassador Shah.

Mr. SHAH (India): Mr. President, my delegation has already had occasion to congratulate you on your ongoing presidency of the Conference. We are pleased to note that, as expected, the work of the Conference on Disarmament is proceeding smoothly under your able guidance.

I have asked for the floor today to inform all delegations present at the Conference on Disarmament that a "Joint declaration on complete prohibition of chemical weapons" was signed by India and Pakistan at New Delhi on Wednesday, 19 August 1992 by the two Foreign Secretaries. In anticipation of the early conclusion of the negotiation of a multilateral global convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons at the Conference on Disarmament, you will recall that India had proposed a bilateral agreement with Pakistan last year and at the previous round of the Foreign-Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan, it was agreed to consider issuing a joint declaration on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons.

It is my pleasure to inform the Conference on Disarmament that under the "Joint declaration on complete prohibition of chemical weapons" signed yesterday, India and Pakistan have undertaken never under any circumstances to develop, produce or otherwise acquire chemical weapons; never to use chemical weapons or to assist, encourage or induce anyone in any way to engage in the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons. Both countries have reiterated their resolve to become original States parties to the proposed convention. They have undertaken to cooperate with each other in finalizing and adopting a comprehensive chemical weapons convention, which would ensure the security of all States and encourage the full utilization of

(Mr. Shah, India)

achievements in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes, especially of economic development of developing countries. They would exercise their right to develop their chemical industry and related applications and products only for peaceful purposes and for the welfare of their peoples. Reaffirming their respective unilateral declarations on non-possession of chemical weapons and their respective commitments to the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, signed at Geneva on 17 June 1925, and recalling the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly upholding the validity of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the two sides have expressed their conviction that a complete and effective prohibition on chemical weapons will contribute to the security of all States and have reiterated the need for the early conclusion within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament of a global convention towards this end. Through this "Joint declaration", the two countries have reaffirmed their commitment to durable peace and the development of friendly and harmonious relations and recognize the role of such confidence-building measures in promoting bilateral relations based on mutual trust and goodwill.

While I have the floor, Mr. President, let me add my personal voice to the tribute you have just paid to Ambassador Negrotto Cambiaso, who will be leaving us soon. We are sorry to see him go but happy that he will assume even greater responsibilities in his country. I wish him all the best in his future work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for the kind words you addressed to me and for the very important statement you have just made. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? The delegation of the United Kingdom - Sir Michael, you have the floor.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): Mr. President, let me begin by joining those who have expressed their pleasure at seeing you in the Chair at this, the final stage in the Conference's work on the chemical weapons convention. I also join with you in conveying our best wishes to our Italian colleague who, to the great loss of all of us here, has been whisked away to deal with even more important matters.

I have asked for the floor to draw the Conference's attention to a statement made by the Foreign Office spokesman yesterday in London in which he said that a global ban on chemical weapons had been a major arms control objective for the United Kingdom for many years. We had given up our own chemical weapons in the 1950s and we had proposed a draft convention as early as 1976. He went on to say that we warmly welcomed the draft convention which had been presented and which we, and the majority of delegations, had accepted as final. This was the culmination of all our efforts. The convention would make a substantial contribution to international peace and security. It would ban the possession, development and use of chemical weapons. It would require all States possessing chemical weapons to destroy them under international supervision. It would also establish the most intrusive verification regime yet agreed in any area of arms control; this would build confidence and deter cheating. The United Kingdom urged all States to accept the draft convention and to sign it as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your kind words to me and for informing us of this important statement by your Government. Is there any other delegation that wishes to speak at this stage? There is none.

I would now like to move on to other matters. As you know, each week the secretariat prepares a timetable of Conference meetings, but with almost all the subsidiary bodies having completed their work, we are planning only the plenary meeting which will be held on Thursday, 27 August, together with two meetings requested by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, on Monday 24 and Wednesday 26 August at 3 p.m. Hence for the moment we did not think it necessary to have a weekly timetable circulated.

As provided for in the Conference's timetable of activities for this week, in half an hour's time we will hold informal consultations on the draft annual report to the General Assembly. We decided to allow the half-hour gap so that various parties could consult further among themselves on a few agenda items that are still causing difficulties. I hope that delegations will be punctual because I intend to start these informal consultations promptly. The meeting will be followed by open-ended consultations, chaired by Ambassador Zahran in his capacity as special coordinator for agenda item 9, on the subject of transparency in armaments.

Since we have now reached the end of the agenda, I will now adjourn the meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place on Thursday, 27 August at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.